

POLITICS

Tories to relaunch campaign after shambolic social care rift

By Paul Gallagher

The Tories will relaunch their general election campaign this week, after it veered sharply off course following a backlash against the party's social care policy.

The Conservative strategist Lynton Crosby has ordered a return

to the core message of focusing on Theresa May as the only person to conduct a successful negotiation over Brexit.

Nervousness has grown within the party over its diminishing lead in the opinion polls, while the Prime Minister's lead over Jeremy Corbyn in personal approval ratings has

shrunk from an astonishing 52 per cent at the start of the election campaign to just 17 per cent.

Nick Timothy, Mrs May's joint chief of staff, has been blamed for forcing the so-called "dementia tax" proposals into the manifesto – without the knowledge of most of the Cabinet. Mr Timothy was has also

been at loggerheads with Fiona Hill, Mrs May's other joint chief of staff, and Mr Crosby over the social care plan, which would have seen people needing care facing uncapped costs until they were down to their last £100,000 of assets, including the value of their home.

The Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, dismissed reports that the Tories were in disarray over the controversial social care plans as "Westminster tittle-tattle".

He told ITV's *Peston on Sunday*: "We've put into the policy now some additional reassurance because of the scaremongering of Labour after the manifesto was published, further reassurance that people will not lose their home, they will not lose all of their savings."

"But yes, some people will be asked to make a contribution to raising the quality of social care."

The Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, told the BBC's *Andrew Marr Show*: "The Prime Minister has said yes, there will be a cap ... But we are not sure where the cap will be. What we are saying is we will have a Green Paper to make sure that we set it at the right level."

In a sign that the Tories are seeking to move on from the social care row, the party highlighted plans for new measures to tackle extremism with the launch of a new Commission for Countering Extremism



Theresa May and her husband, Phillip, after Sunday service in Sonning. REUTERS

CAMPAIGN

Advisers turn on each other as lead shrinks

By Paul Gallagher

The shrinking Tory lead in the polls has prompted anger and recrimination at Conservative central office with a number of senior ministers and officials seeking to blame each other for allowing Jeremy Corbyn to edge closer in the race for No 10.

Theresa May's decision to run a tight ship with her two closest advisers Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill – of whom MPs had already complained – looked weird when things were going smoothly. Suddenly, even the two officials have been arguing, according to reports, over the final wording of the Tories' social care reforms in the party's manifesto.

Sir Lynton Crosby, the Conservative election strategist,

will be exerting more control on the campaign in its final days and will have an "iron grip" on the message. He saw the manifesto containing the "dementia tax" only a day or so before it went to the printer.

The Home Secretary Amber Rudd and the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson are the "big hitters" expected to be brought out in the coming days. Ms Rudd will represent the Conservatives in a live TV general election debate with leaders of some of the other parties, after Mrs May refused to take part.

Ms Rudd was considered to have performed well, appearing for the Remain side in TV debates in the EU referendum, when she accused her pro-Brexit colleague Mr Johnson of "misleading

the public" and said: "The only number that Boris is interested in is the one that says No 10."

Mr Johnson, who until now has largely been silent in the election campaign, condemned comments yesterday made by Jeremy Corbyn and the shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott when the pair were challenged on their support for Irish republicanism.

The Chancellor Philip Hammond is not expected to play a big role, which will undoubtedly lead to further speculation as to whether he will stay in his post after the election.

Projections for the election result have shifted, from a majority of almost 200 in week one of the campaign to a majority of around 80 now.

MEDIA

Ready to pounce: how Paxo could challenge party leaders

Questions the interviewer might pose to his subjects

THERESA MAY

You presided over huge cuts to police while Home Secretary. Do you feel partly responsible for what happened in Manchester?

The Prime Minister is likely to face questions over critics' claims that her past actions are at odds with her commitment to keeping the UK secure. Her claim in 2015 that police were "crying wolf" with warnings about the impact of staff reductions may come back to haunt her. Paxman is likely to have statistics showing that around 20,000 police jobs have been cut since the Conservatives came to power in 2010, with budgets also reduced by 4 per cent in each year that Mrs May was Home Secretary.

You come across as a bit of robot, parroting the same slogans over and over again. You're not a very normal person, are you?

Mrs May will be taking a risk if she deploys her "strong and stable"



soundbite on Paxman, who may scoff at her tactics and accuse her of patronising the electorate. He may highlight polls showing that her approval ratings have plummeted since she started engaging directly with the electorate during the campaign, exploiting her awkwardness in interviews.

The Tories have been all over the place on social care and pensions. Do you have a problem with older people?

Mrs May can expect a hard time over her embarrassing U-turn on plans to make people worth over £100,000 pay for their social care. The Tories have since promised to cap the amount taken from a person's estate after a barrage of criticism. Paxman could give her an old-fashioned grilling on the details of the policy, pressing her to name a figure at which the cap on care costs will be set and refusing to move on until she does so. He could also use her plans to ditch the pensions "triple lock" to suggest that she is having a go at elderly people.

JEREMY CORBYN

People view you as weak and indecisive. Do you actually want to be Prime Minister of this country?

The issue of Mr Corbyn's leadership abilities is almost certain to arise. Previous interviewers have

suggested that he is much more comfortable in opposition and does not actually want to be in the top job. Paxman may ask him what he would do in certain leadership scenarios, such as a nuclear attack. He may also grill him over whether he will cling on as leader if Labour lose the election.

Experts have concluded that your spending plans do not add up. Are you lying?

This is a question that could be posed to both leaders, after the number-crunchers at the Institute for Fiscal Studies concluded that both manifestos were not being honest with voters. But as Labour's plans suggest raising £49bn a year, Mr Corbyn may come under pressure to explain in detail how this would work. The manifesto says the proposals are "fully costed", so Paxman could fire off a series of questions to test his grasp of the numbers, saving any slip-ups.

What's the point of renewing Trident if you're never going to use it?

Whether he decides to explore Mr Corbyn's complex relationship with the UK's nuclear deterrent or his past comments on the IRA, Paxman is almost certain to cross-examine the Labour leader on his defence credentials.

UKIP

'Bring back death penalty and I'll be executioner'

By Felicity Morse

Ukip leader Paul Nuttall (*inset*) showed no sign of relaxing his robust approach to election campaigning yesterday, promising to act personally as an executioner of paedophiles and terrorists and defending the party's face-covering ban – although adding that special dispensation could be made for carnival masks.



Mr Nuttall supports the return of the death penalty, although this is not official Ukip policy. He told *The Mail on Sunday*: "For people who kill a [British] soldier and harm children, I would not have a problem doing it [personally]."

"I believe in capital punishment for treason. Opinion polls show the vast majority of people agree with me."

Petitions to bring back the death penalty are frequently the most signed on the government website. Mr Nuttall said he would be "only too happy" to offer a referendum on the issue if enough people wanted it.

SOCIAL CARE

Warning about family inheritance

By David Hughes

The "dementia tax" could result in up to half the value of the average family home being put at risk, the Liberal Democrats claimed as they continued to attack Theresa May over her social care policy.

The Conservatives have not specified at what level social care costs would be capped and only committed to putting an upper limit in place

EUROPE

Clegg says PM puts UK security in jeopardy'

By David Hughes

Brexit on Theresa May's terms is a threat to national security, the former deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has claimed.

Under the Prime Minister's plans to end the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in the UK, there is the potential for police to lose access to the Schengen Information System (SIS II) – an important database on criminals and terrorists. Mr Clegg, the Liberal Democrats' EU spokesman, warned that the plans pose "a direct threat to our national security".

SIS II is a database of "real time" alerts about individuals of interest to EU law-enforcement agencies. It contains information on thousands of people wanted under the European Arrest Warrant, as well as alerts on suspected foreign fighters.

UK police and security services queried the database more than half a billion times in 2016 – equivalent to 16 checks a second. The Lib Dems said access to SIS II is limited to countries that abide by the rulings of the European Court of Justice.

POLITICS

Tories fear small majority or hung parliament

By Shebab Khan

The Conservative Party is understood to have revised down its internal projections for the general election after a clutch of new polls have shown their lead over the Labour Party is narrowing.

Estimations for the best-case scenario have been revised by the Tories from a majority of 200 down to 80. The projection for the worst-case scenario is a hung parliament, an idea that was initially inconceivable when Theresa May first called the election.

A series of polls have shown Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party closing the gap on the Prime Minister, who had a lead of 25 points when the election was called.

Labour was six points behind in a poll conducted by ORB for *The Sunday Telegraph* and has slashed the lead in half compared with the previous week.

In the poll, the Conservative Party is on 44 per cent and Labour on 38 per cent. This is Labour's best rating since Mr Corbyn became leader and means he would outpoll Ed Miliband and Gordon Brown's election results if the pattern is repeated on 8 June.

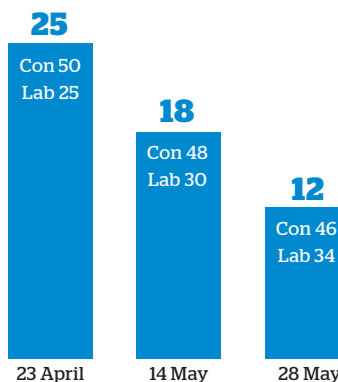
It is not the only poll to show the Tory lead shrinking. One conducted by ComRes for *The Independent* put the Conservatives 12 points ahead, a reduction in their lead by six points from the week before. In *The Sunday Times*, a YouGov poll also showed a much smaller Tory lead. The Conservatives were seven points ahead on 43 per cent with the Labour Party trailing on 36 per cent.

An Opinium poll for *The Observer* also came to the same conclusion. Over the past week, Mrs May's lead has gone down from 13 points to 10. The Tories were one point lower in the poll at 45 per cent and Labour are up two on 35 per cent. The poll also showed that more than a third of voters say their opinion of the Prime Minister is more negative than it was when the election was called.

THE INDEPENDENT

Poll tracker

Tories lead on Labour falls to 12 points



SOURCE: COMRES